Read more FREE comics on ReadComicOnline

ISSUE #5

MONSTRESS

MARJORIE LIU • SANA TAKEDA

WRITER ARTIST

RUS WOOTON JENNIFER M. SMITH

LETTERING & DESIGN EDITOR

THE STORY SO FAR...In the aftermath of a terrible war, tensions between the Federation of Man and the supernatural Arcanic hybrids remain high. Maika Halfwolf, an Arcanic teen and war survivor, has found herself at the center of that conflict. After bidding farewell to her closest friend, Tuya, Maika traveled to the city of Zamora, where she broke into the stronghold of the Cumaea, a human religious order that slaughters Arcanics to harvest the precious lilium that flows through their bodies. There, Maika obtained a photograph and a fragment of an ancient and powerful mask that might provide answers about the murder of her mother.

Now Maika and her companions, Kippa and Ren, are on the run – hunted by Federation and Cumaean forces. But Maika has fought them all off with the help of her greatest secret, and greatest burden: a creature called a Monstrum that lives inside of her and hungers for flesh. Unfortunately, the humans are not Maika's only pursuers. The Warlord of the Arcanic Dawn Court is seeking the monster that lives within Maika – and so, too, are the members of the mysterious Dusk Court, one of whom has just descended from the sky...

MONSTRESS CREATED BY MARJORIE LIU & SANA TAKEDA

HTTP://MONSTRESS-COMIC.TUMBLR.COM

MONSTRESS™ #5. April 2016. **Published by Image Comics, Inc.** Office of publication: 2001 Center Street, 6th Floor, Berkeley, CA 94704. Copyright © 2016 Marjorie Liu & Sana Takeda. All rights reserved. MONSTRESS™ (including all prominent characters featured herein), its logo and all character likenesses are trademarks of Marjorie Liu & Sana Takeda, unless otherwise noted. Image Comics® and its logos are registered trademarks and copyrights of Image Comics, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means (except for short excerpts for review purposes) without the express written permission of Image Comics, Inc. All names, characters, events and locales in this publication are entirely fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons (living or dead), events or places, without satiric intent, is coincidental. **DIGITAL EDITION**. For international rights inquiries, contact: foreignlicensing@imagecomics.com

IMAGE COMICS, INC.
Robert Kirkman - Chief Operating Officer
Erik Larsen - Chief Financial Officer
Todd McFarlane - President
Marc Silvestri - Chief Executive Officer
Jim Valentino - Vice-President
Eric Stephenson - Publisher
Corey Murphy - Director of Sales
Jeff Boison - Director of Publishing Planning & Book Trade Sales
Jeremy Sullivan - Director of Digital Sales
Kat Salazar - Director of PR & Marketing
Emily Miller - Director of Operations
Branwyn Bigglestone - Senior Accounts Manager
Sarah Mello - Accounts Manager
Drew Gill - Art Director
Jonathan Chan - Production Manager
Meredith Wallace - Print Manager
Briah Skelly - Publicity Assistant
Sasha Head - Sales & Marketing Production Designer
Randy Okamura - Digital Production Designer
David Brothers - Branding Manager
Ally Power - Content Manager
Addison Duke - Production Artist
Vincent Kukua - Production Artist
Tricia Ramos - Production Artist
Jeff Stang - Direct Market Sales Representative
Emilio Bautista - Digital Sales Associate
Leanna Gaunter - Accounting Assistant
Chloe Ramos-Peterson - Administrative Assistant
IMAGECOMICS.COM

SEVEN YEARS AGO.
Would you believe me, Tuya, if I told you I'm empty on the inside?
Would that make it easier?
I hunger, and I rage -- and I tell myself there's nothing else inside me.
Memories don't count. Not when they're all like this.

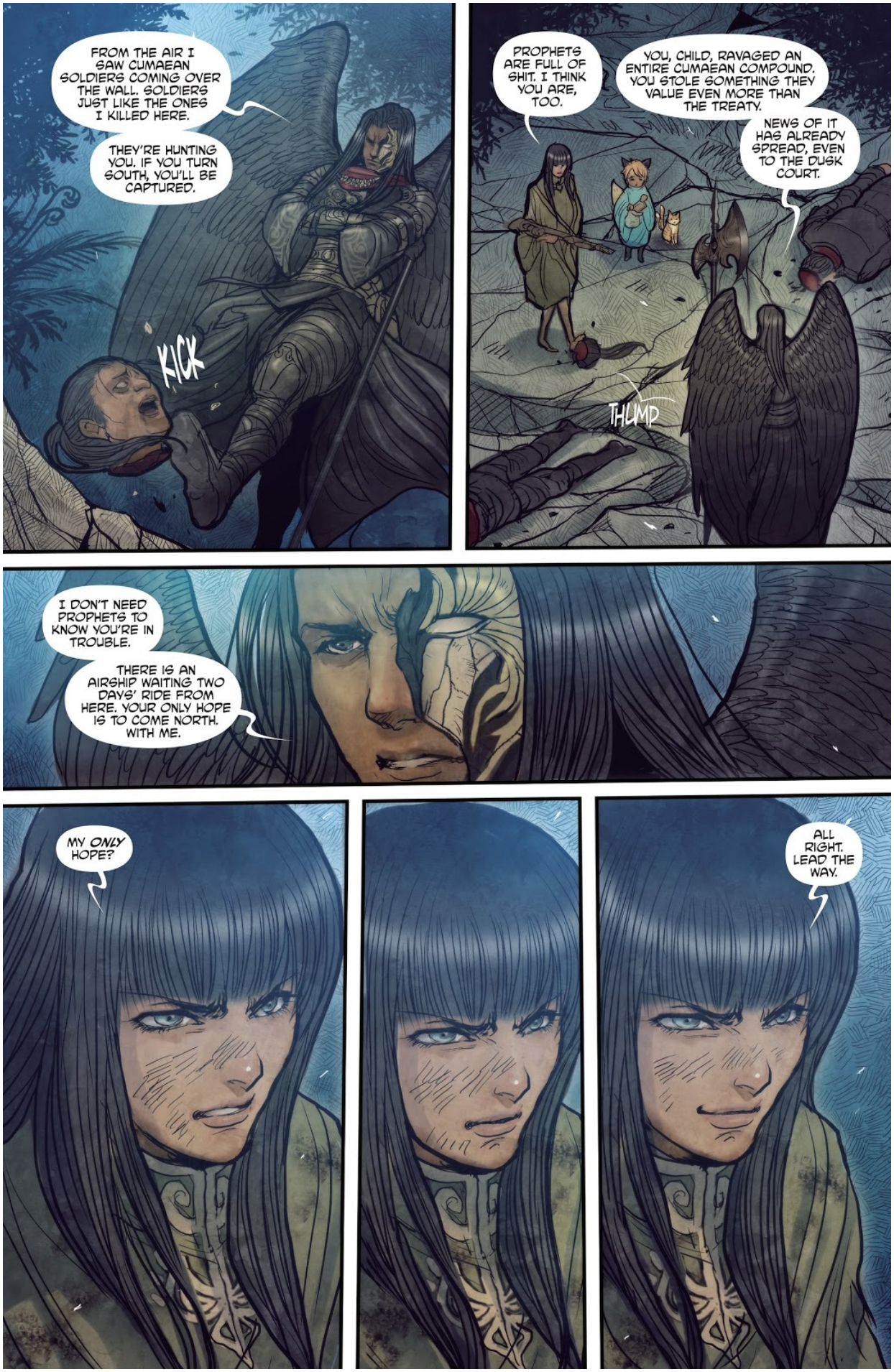
LADY ILSA, YOU'LL CATCH A COLD. YOU SHOULD COME INSIDE.
HOLD YOUR TONGUE, BRAT. I'M RUNNING AN EXPERIMENT.
I'm empty.
Except I'm not.
WHO IS THE HUNGRIEST OF ALL, I WONDER?
You remember what it was like when we were slaves?
WHO WILL PASS MY TEST?
How you and I convinced each other we still owned our lives?
How we imagined ourselves somewhere else?
But the dream never lasted.
We had to endure.
We had to fight.

You were always the one who hoped. You had enough hope for the both of us.
TUYA? ARE YOU HURT?
=MMMF= NO.
I wish I had that gift.
I SAVED YOU SOME, MAIKA.
Because I'm in a cage again, Tuya.
PFFT
My body isn't my own.
YOU AND I... WE'LL TAKE CARE OF EACH OTHER. FOREVER.
I PROMISE.
There's something else inside me.
Maybe I've lost my mind.
VERY... INTERESTING.
I'm scared, Tuya. So scared I can't breathe.
All I can do is pretend it doesn't exist.
I wish I'd never left you.

DID YOU BETRAY US, CAT?
TUYA TOLD ME TO BRING YOU OVER THE WALL. SHE SAID SOMEONE WOULD MEET US.
I DIDN'T KNOW THAT SOMEONE WOULD BE FROM THE DUSK COURT. AND I DIDN'T DARE REFUSE HIM WHEN HE TOOK YOUR THINGS.
TUYA DOESN'T HAVE CONNECTIONS IN THE DUSK COURT. NO ONE DOES. NOT SINCE CONSTANTINE.
MAIKA HALFWOLF.
I WAS EXPECTING A GROWN WOMAN, GIVEN THE AMOUNT OF BLOOD YOU'RE ACCUSED OF SPILLING IN ZAMORA.
BUT YOU'RE ONLY A CHILD.
WE HAVE BROKEN OUR LONG SILENCE FOR YOU.
I AM SIR CORVIN D'ORO, FIRST WATCHMAN OF THE COURT, COMMANDER OF THE INNER WALL. I AM HERE TO GUIDE YOU TO SAFETY.

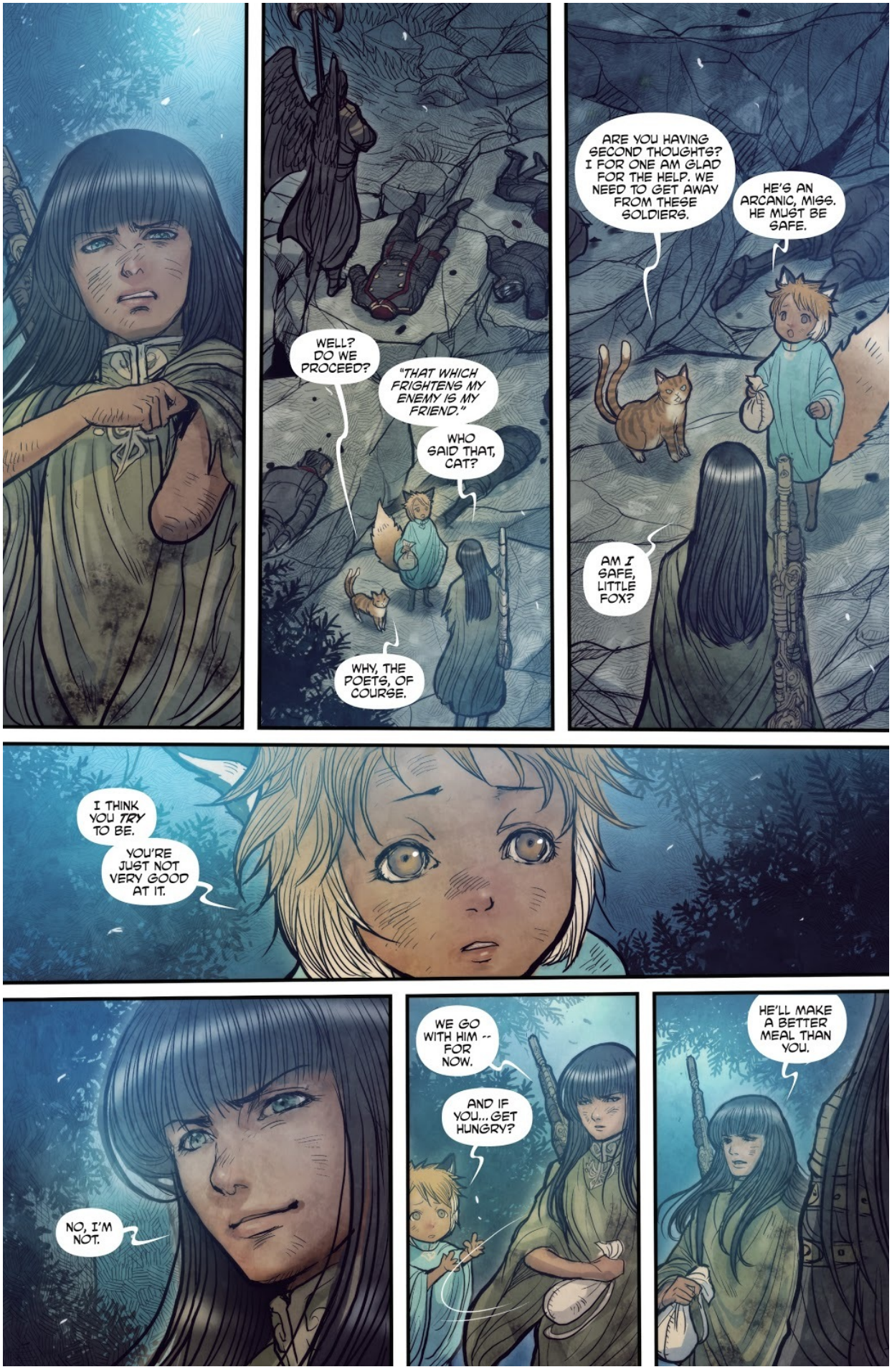
STAY RIGHT THERE. DON'T COME ANY CLOSER.
MAIKA, DON'T THREATEN A MEMBER OF THE DUSK COURT! UNLESS YOU WANT US ALL TO DIE.
I'LL DO MORE THAN THREATEN. I'LL BLOW YOUR WINGS OFF YOUR FUCKING BACK.
TOSS THE BAG TO THE LITTLE FOX.
BLAM
WHERE'S TUYA?
I DO NOT KNOW THAT NAME.
I WAS COMMANDED HERE BY A GATHERING OF THE DUSK COURT.
UPON PAIN OF DEATH I WAS TO FIND YOU -- AND BRING YOU NORTH.
WHY?
MISS?
SOMETHING'S MISSING.

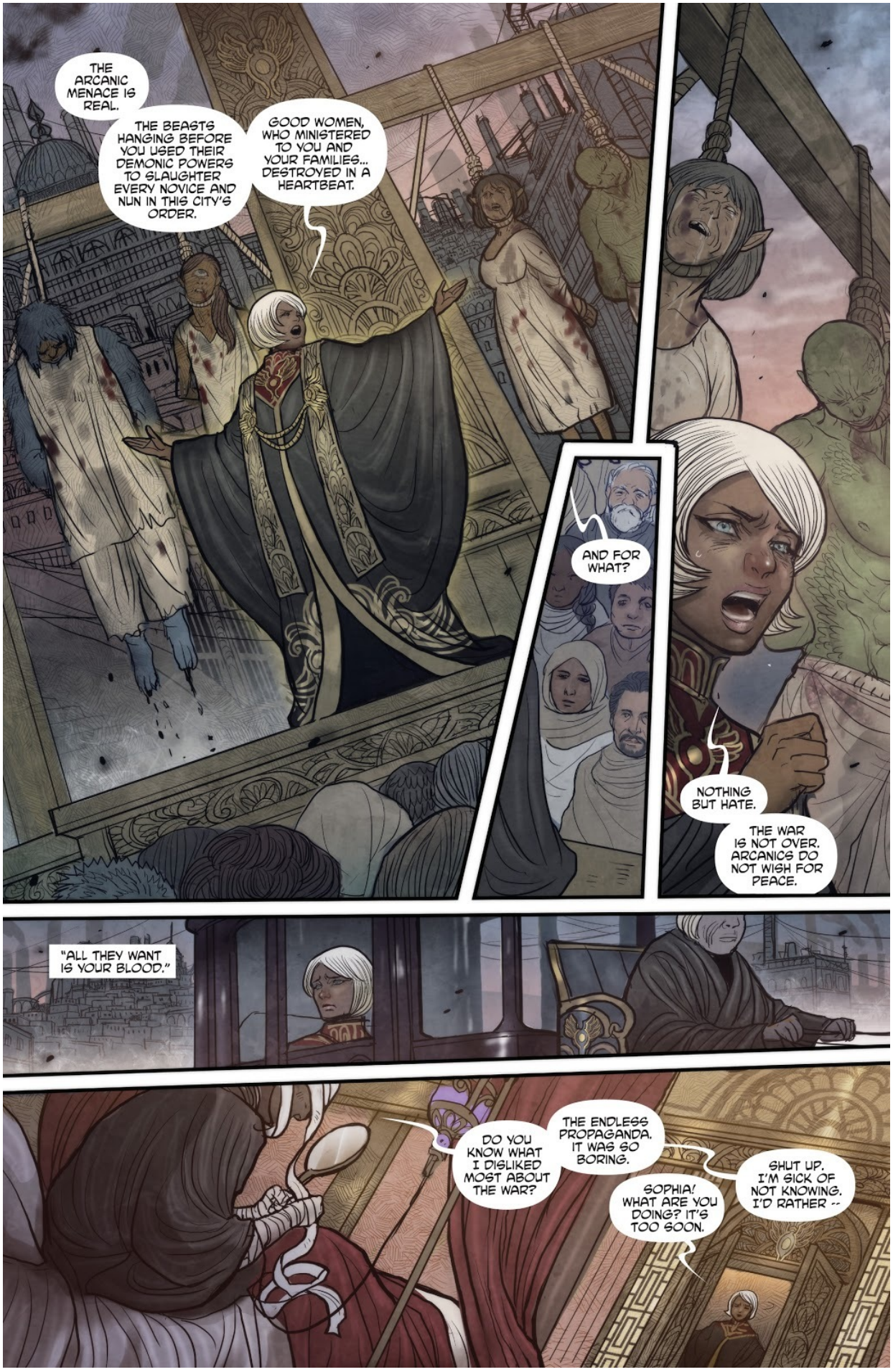
THE HALFWOLF BLOOD RUNS STRONG IN ALL OF YOU.
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TAKEN THAT PHOTO, SIR. YOU SHOULD GIVE IT BACK.
BEFORE SOMETHING BAD HAPPENS.
BRING IT TO ME, KIPPA.
MISS?
YOU DON'T KNOW SHIT, RAVENBORN.
I KNOW YOU ARE THE LONE DAUGHTER OF THE GREAT MORIKO HALFWOLF.
I KNOW THAT THE EYE OF THE DUSK COURT IS UPON YOU.
THE PROPHETS HAVE SEEN YOUR FACE. THEY HAVE TOLD THE GATHERING THAT YOU CARRY A POWER THAT WILL RESHAPE THE WORLD. FOR BETTER OR WORSE.
THEY PROPHESIZE THAT WITHOUT YOUR POWER, THE DUSK COURT WILL FALL.
THAT'S ALL VERY SAD.
BUT I'M NOT GOING NORTH. FOR ANY REASON. SO GO BACK TO YOUR COURT AND ITS SILENCE. TELL THEM WE HAVEN'T MISSED ANY OF YOU.
YOU'LL DIE IF YOU GO SOUTH. IF YOU GO TO THYRIA.
THE PROPHETS HAVE SEEN THAT, TOO.

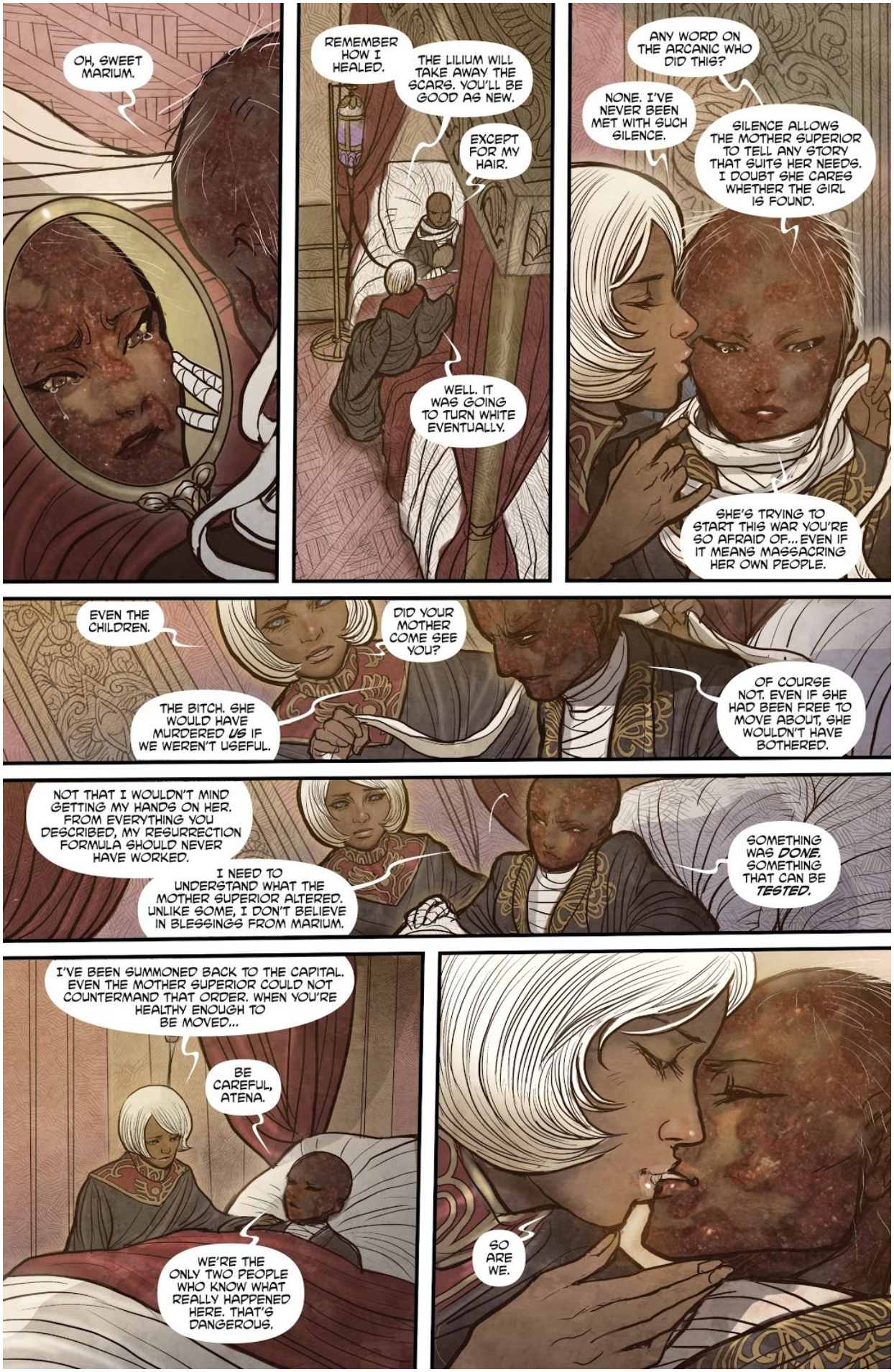

FROM THE AIR I SAW CUMAEAN SOLDIERS COMING OVER THE WALL. SOLDIERS JUST LIKE THE ONES I KILLED HERE.
THEY'RE HUNTING YOU. IF YOU TURN SOUTH, YOU'LL BE CAPTURED.
KICK
PROPHETS ARE FULL OF SHIT. I THINK YOU ARE, TOO.
YOU, CHILD, RAVAGED AN ENTIRE CUMAEAN COMPOUND. YOU STOLE SOMETHING THEY VALUE EVEN MORE THAN THE TREATY.
NEWS OF IT HAS ALREADY SPREAD, EVEN TO THE DUSK COURT.
THUMP
I DON'T NEED PROPHETS TO KNOW YOU'RE IN TROUBLE.
THERE IS AN AIRSHIP WAITING TWO DAYS' RIDE FROM HERE. YOUR ONLY HOPE IS TO COME NORTH. WITH ME.
MY *ONLY* HOPE?
ALL RIGHT. LEAD THE WAY.

THAT... IS VERY SENSIBLE.
I HAVE TO PISS.
THEN WE'LL LEAVE.
AH.
REALLY? THERE ARE BUSHES, YOU KNOW.
ARCKLE
GIRL--
DO NOT TALK TO ME, DEMON.
FOOLISH GIRL, CAN YOU NOT SEE? THAT IS NO COMMON SERVANT OF THE COURT.
THAT IS AN ARCANIC LORD. THE CHILD OF AN ANCIENT, IN FULL POWER.
TALK TO ME AGAIN AND I'LL CUT YOU OUT OF ME.
WE MUST GET AWAY FROM HIM -- HE COULD KILL US BEFORE YOU DRAW A SINGLE BREATH.
I TOLD YOU TO SHUT UP.
WHY DON'T YOU JUST DRAIN HIS LIFE? AREN'T YOU HUNGRY?
HOW YOUR LINE HAS SO DEGENERATED, I CANNOT EXPLAIN. CAN YOU NOT SENSE THE SHIELD SURROUNDING HIM?
EVEN I, AT MY FULL STRENGTH, COULD NOT PIERCE IT EASILY.
YOU WOULD BE IN FORTY-NINE PIECES BEFORE I PUNCHED THROUGH IT. AND I AM WEARY.
REALLY. TELL ME WHY I SHOULD BELIEVE A WORD YOU SAY.
DO NOT BE DUMBER THAN YOU ARE, GIRL.
THIS IS THE SECOND TIME YOU HAVE BEEN IN THE PRESENCE OF AN ARCANIC LORD AND NOT KNOWN IT.
YOU CANNOT EVEN TRUST YOURSELF.
I MUST SLEEP AGAIN.
RUN, FOOLISH GIRL. OR DIE. I SUPPOSE IT DOES NOT MATTER TO ME, EITHER WAY.
THERE IS STILL ANOTHER OF YOUR LINE INTO WHOM I MAY PASS.
WAIT... WHAT DID YOU SAY?

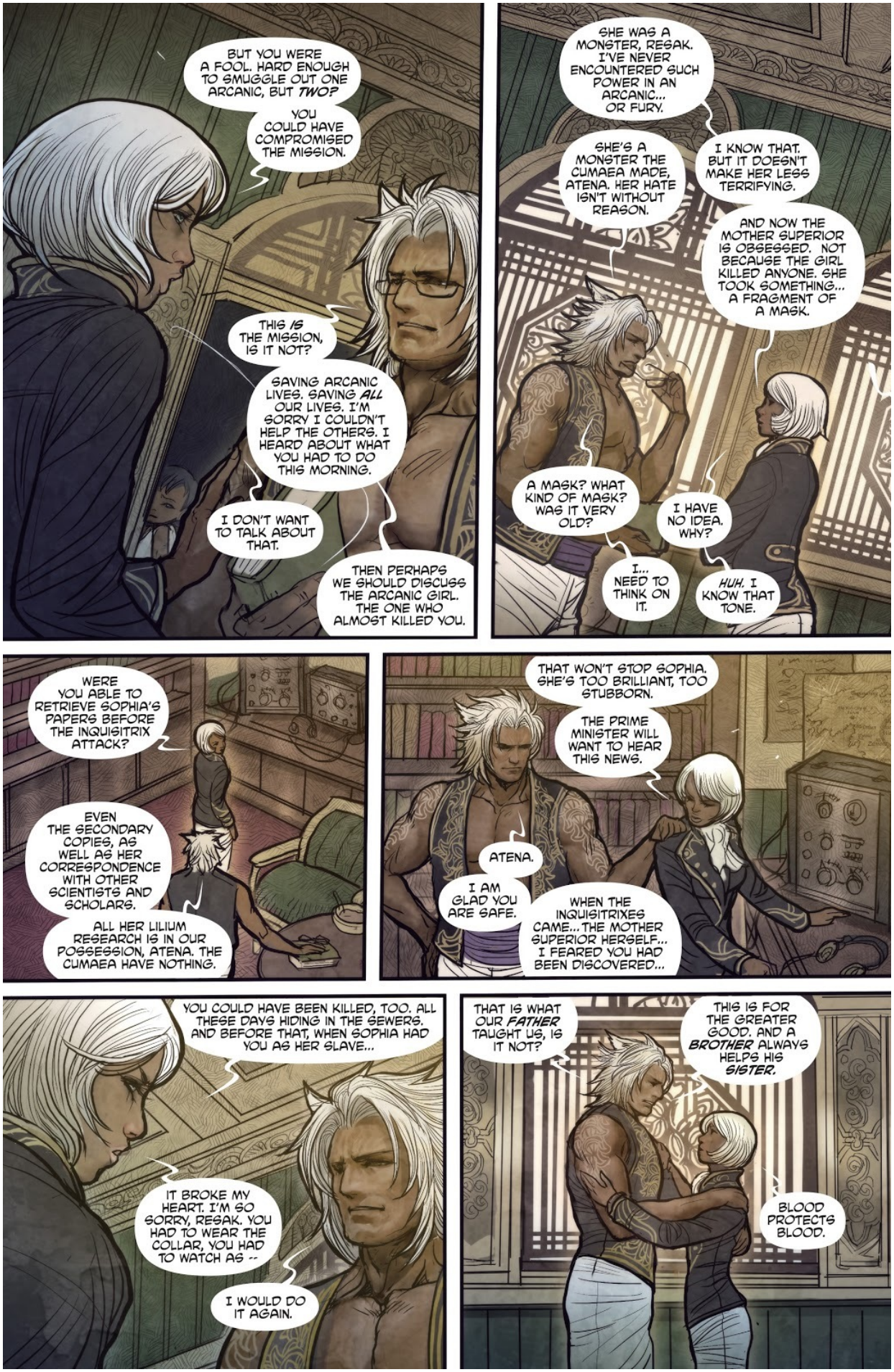
Read more FREE comics on ReadComicOnline

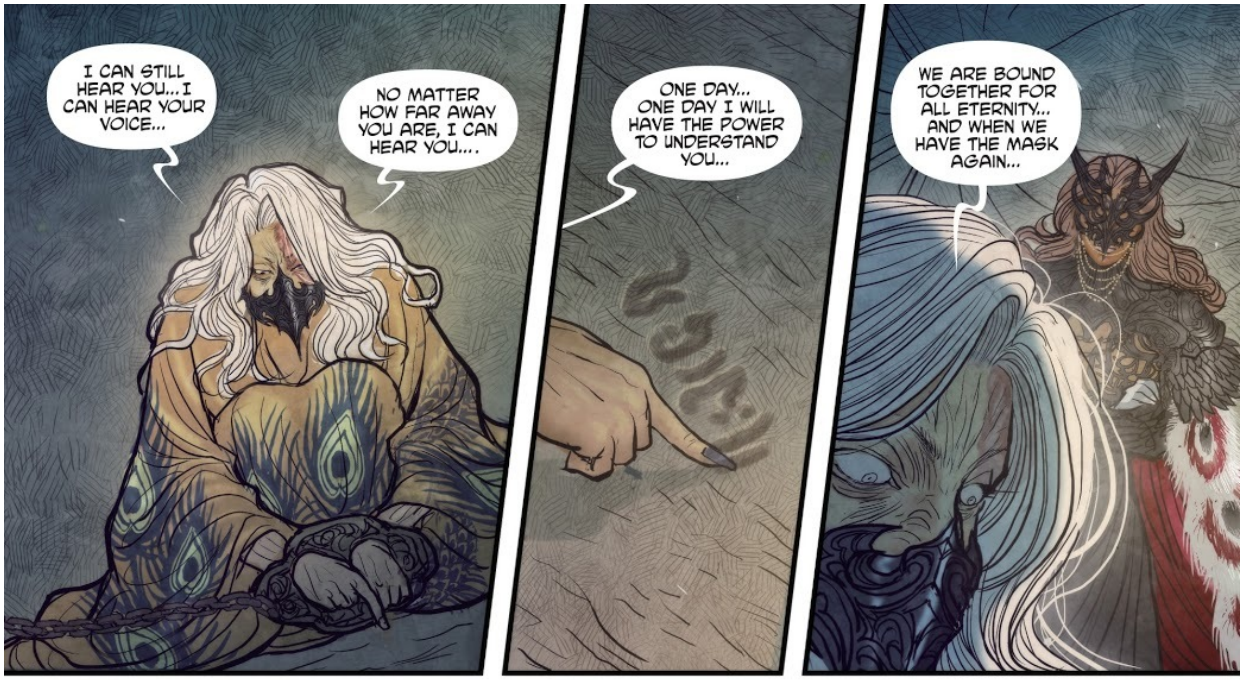

WELL? DO WE PROCEED?
"THAT WHICH FRIGHTENS MY ENEMY IS MY FRIEND."
WHO SAID THAT, CAT?
WHY, THE POETS, OF COURSE.
ARE YOU HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS? I FOR ONE AM GLAD FOR THE HELP. WE NEED TO GET AWAY FROM THESE SOLDIERS.
HE'S AN ARCANIC, MISS. HE MUST BE SAFE.
AM I SAFE, LITTLE FOX?
I THINK YOU TRY TO BE.
YOU'RE JUST NOT VERY GOOD AT IT.
NO, I'M NOT.
WE GO WITH HIM -- FOR NOW.
AND IF YOU... GET HUNGRY?
HE'LL MAKE A BETTER MEAL THAN YOU.

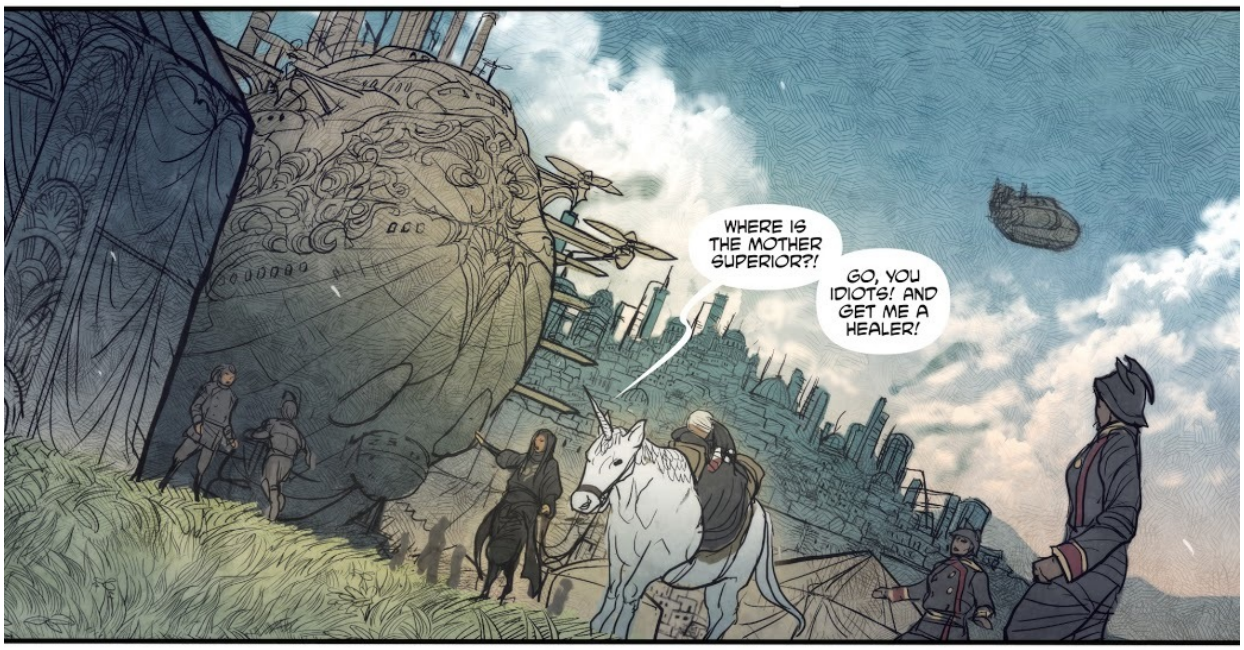

THE ARCANIC MENACE IS REAL.
THE BEASTS HANGING BEFORE YOU USED THEIR DEMONIC POWERS TO SLAUGHTER EVERY NOVICE AND NUN IN THIS CITY'S ORDER.
GOOD WOMEN, WHO MINISTERED TO YOU AND YOUR FAMILIES... DESTROYED IN A HEARTBEAT.
AND FOR WHAT?
NOTHING BUT HATE.
THE WAR IS NOT OVER. ARCANICS DO NOT WISH FOR PEACE.
"ALL THEY WANT IS YOUR BLOOD."
DO YOU KNOW WHAT I DISLIKED MOST ABOUT THE WAR?
THE ENDLESS PROPAGANDA. IT WAS SO BORING.
SOPHIA! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? IT'S TOO SOON.
SHUT UP. I'M SICK OF NOT KNOWING. I'D RATHER --

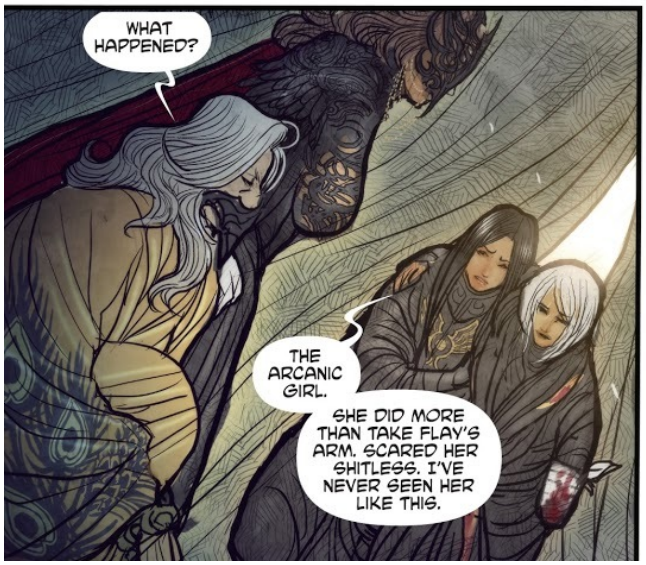

OH, SWEET MARIUM.
REMEMBER HOW I HEALED.
THE LILIUM WILL TAKE AWAY THE SCARS. YOU'LL BE GOOD AS NEW.
EXCEPT FOR MY HAIR.
WELL. IT WAS GOING TO TURN WHITE EVENTUALLY.
ANY WORD ON THE ARCANIC WHO DID THIS?
NONE. I'VE NEVER BEEN MET WITH SUCH SILENCE.
SILENCE ALLOWS THE MOTHER SUPERIOR TO TELL ANY STORY THAT SUITS HER NEEDS. I DOUBT SHE CARES WHETHER THE GIRL IS FOUND.
SHE'S TRYING TO START THIS WAR YOU'RE SO AFRAID OF... EVEN IF IT MEANS MASSACRING HER OWN PEOPLE.
EVEN THE CHILDREN.
DID YOUR MOTHER COME SEE YOU?
THE BITCH. SHE WOULD HAVE MURDERED *US* IF WE WEREN'T USEFUL.
OF COURSE NOT. EVEN IF SHE HAD BEEN FREE TO MOVE ABOUT, SHE WOULDN'T HAVE BOTHERED.
NOT THAT I WOULDN'T MIND GETTING MY HANDS ON HER. FROM EVERYTHING YOU DESCRIBED, MY RESURRECTION FORMULA SHOULD NEVER HAVE WORKED.
I NEED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THE MOTHER SUPERIOR ALTERED. UNLIKE SOME, I DON'T BELIEVE IN BLESSINGS FROM MARIUM.
SOMETHING WAS ***DONE.*** SOMETHING THAT CAN BE ***TESTED.***
I'VE BEEN SUMMONED BACK TO THE CAPITAL. EVEN THE MOTHER SUPERIOR COULD NOT COUNTERMAND THAT ORDER. WHEN YOU'RE HEALTHY ENOUGH TO BE MOVED...
BE CAREFUL, ATENA.
WE'RE THE ONLY TWO PEOPLE WHO KNOW WHAT REALLY HAPPENED HERE. THAT'S DANGEROUS.
SO ARE WE.

CAPTAIN GOODWILL. IT'S SO LOVELY TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
THE SAME TO YOU, LADY ATENA. IT'S BEEN TOO LONG.
YOUR FAMILY IS A MITE WORRIED, GIVEN RECENT EVENTS. YOUR SISTER SAID WE SHOULD BE AT YOUR DISPOSAL AS LONG AS YOU NEED US.
I APPRECIATE THAT, CAPTAIN.
AND MY GUEST? I ASSUME HE'S SAFE BELOW?
NO ONE SAW US BRING HIM ABOARD. HIM, OR THE CHILD.
CHILD?
SEBASTI... GO INTO THE OTHER ROOM.
DAMN YOU, RESAK.
THANK MARIUM YOU'RE OUT OF THAT PLACE.

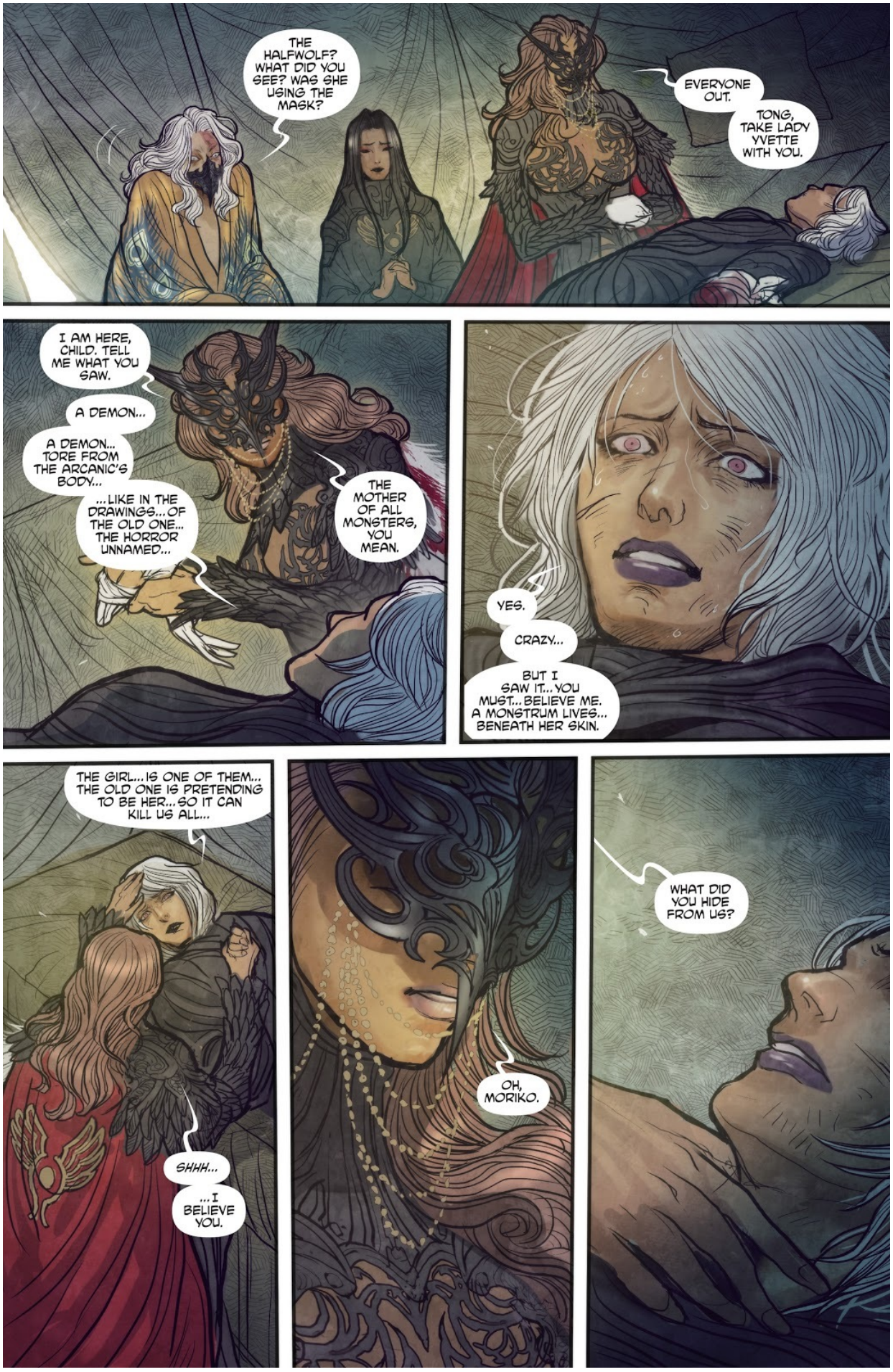

BUT YOU WERE A FOOL. HARD ENOUGH TO SMUGGLE OUT ONE ARCANIC, BUT *TWO?*
YOU COULD HAVE COMPROMISED THE MISSION.
THIS *IS* THE MISSION, IS IT NOT?
SAVING ARCANIC LIVES. SAVING *ALL* OUR LIVES. I'M SORRY I COULDN'T HELP THE OTHERS. I HEARD ABOUT WHAT YOU HAD TO DO THIS MORNING.
I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT THAT.
THEN PERHAPS WE SHOULD DISCUSS THE ARCANIC GIRL. THE ONE WHO ALMOST KILLED YOU.
SHE WAS A MONSTER, RESAK. I'VE NEVER ENCOUNTERED SUCH POWER IN AN ARCANIC... OR FURY.
I KNOW THAT. BUT IT DOESN'T MAKE HER LESS TERRIFYING.
SHE'S A MONSTER THE CUMAEA MADE, ATENA. HER HATE ISN'T WITHOUT REASON.
AND NOW THE MOTHER SUPERIOR IS OBSESSED. NOT BECAUSE THE GIRL KILLED ANYONE. SHE TOOK SOMETHING... A FRAGMENT OF A MASK.
A MASK? WHAT KIND OF MASK? WAS IT VERY OLD?
I HAVE NO IDEA. WHY?
I... NEED TO THINK ON IT.
HUH. I KNOW THAT TONE.
WERE YOU ABLE TO RETRIEVE SOPHIA'S PAPERS BEFORE THE INQUISITRIX ATTACK?
EVEN THE SECONDARY COPIES, AS WELL AS HER CORRESPONDENCE WITH OTHER SCIENTISTS AND SCHOLARS.
ALL HER LILIUM RESEARCH IS IN OUR POSSESSION, ATENA. THE CUMAEA HAVE NOTHING.
THAT WON'T STOP SOPHIA. SHE'S TOO BRILLIANT, TOO STUBBORN.
THE PRIME MINISTER WILL WANT TO HEAR THIS NEWS.
ATENA.
I AM GLAD YOU ARE SAFE.
WHEN THE INQUISITRIXES CAME... THE MOTHER SUPERIOR HERSELF... I FEARED YOU HAD BEEN DISCOVERED...
YOU COULD HAVE BEEN KILLED, TOO. ALL THESE DAYS HIDING IN THE SEWERS. AND BEFORE THAT, WHEN SOPHIA HAD YOU AS HER SLAVE...
IT BROKE MY HEART. I'M SO SORRY, RESAK. YOU HAD TO WEAR THE COLLAR, YOU HAD TO WATCH AS --
I WOULD DO IT AGAIN.
THAT IS WHAT OUR *FATHER* TAUGHT US, IS IT NOT?
THIS IS FOR THE GREATER GOOD. AND A *BROTHER* ALWAYS HELPS HIS *SISTER.*
BLOOD PROTECTS BLOOD.


I CAN STILL HEAR YOU... I CAN HEAR YOUR VOICE...
NO MATTER HOW FAR AWAY YOU ARE, I CAN HEAR YOU....
ONE DAY... ONE DAY I WILL HAVE THE POWER TO UNDERSTAND YOU...
WE ARE BOUND TOGETHER FOR ALL ETERNITY... AND WHEN WE HAVE THE MASK AGAIN...


WHERE IS THE MOTHER SUPERIOR?!
GO, YOU IDIOTS! AND GET ME A HEALER!


WHAT HAPPENED?
THE ARCANIC GIRL.
SHE DID MORE THAN TAKE FLAY'S ARM. SCARED HER SHITLESS. I'VE NEVER SEEN HER LIKE THIS.

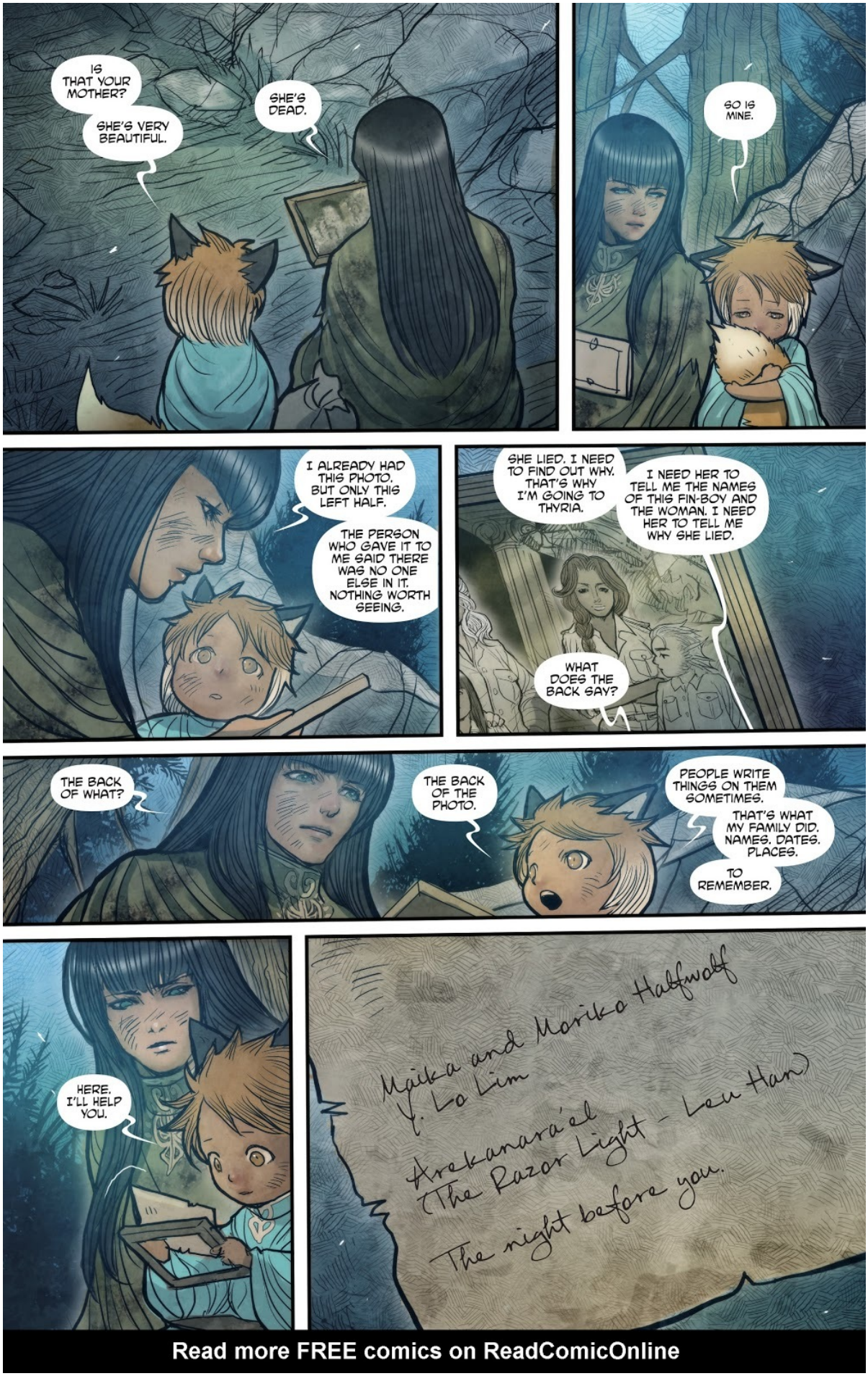
NO... NO LILIUM. NEED A CLEAR HEAD.
HAVE TO TELL... WHAT I SAW....
A MONSTRUM... IN HER SKIN...

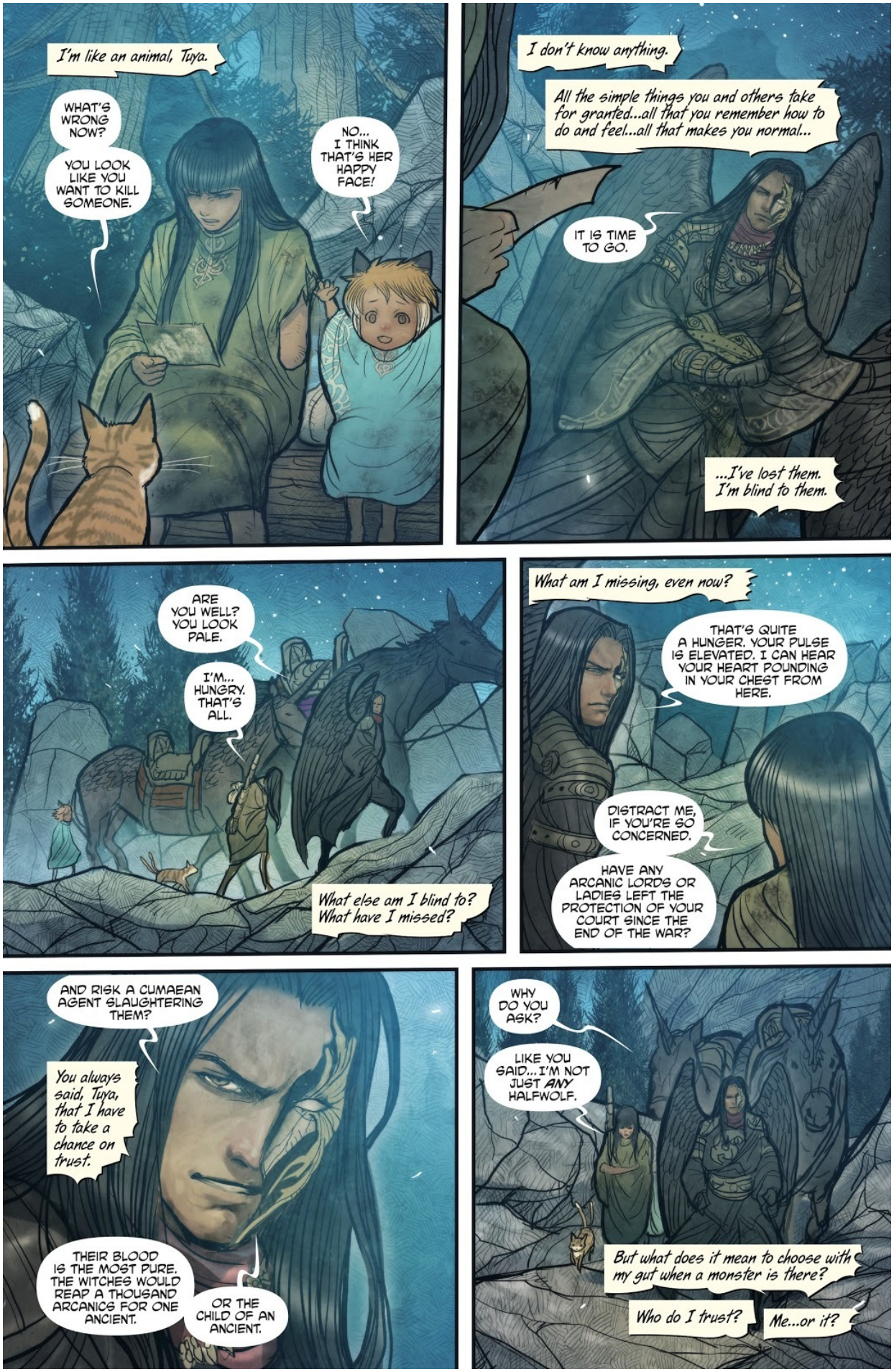

THE HALFWOLF? WHAT DID YOU SEE? WAS SHE USING THE MASK?
EVERYONE OUT.
TONG, TAKE LADY YVETTE WITH YOU.
I AM HERE, CHILD. TELL ME WHAT YOU SAW.
A DEMON...
A DEMON... TORE FROM THE ARCANIC'S BODY...
...LIKE IN THE DRAWINGS... OF THE OLD ONE... THE HORROR UNNAMED...
THE MOTHER OF ALL MONSTERS, YOU MEAN.
YES.
CRAZY...
BUT I SAW IT... YOU MUST... BELIEVE ME. A MONSTRUM LIVES... BENEATH HER SKIN.
THE GIRL... IS ONE OF THEM... THE OLD ONE IS PRETENDING TO BE HER... SO IT CAN KILL US ALL...
SHHH...
...I BELIEVE YOU.
OH, MORIKO.
WHAT DID YOU HIDE FROM US?

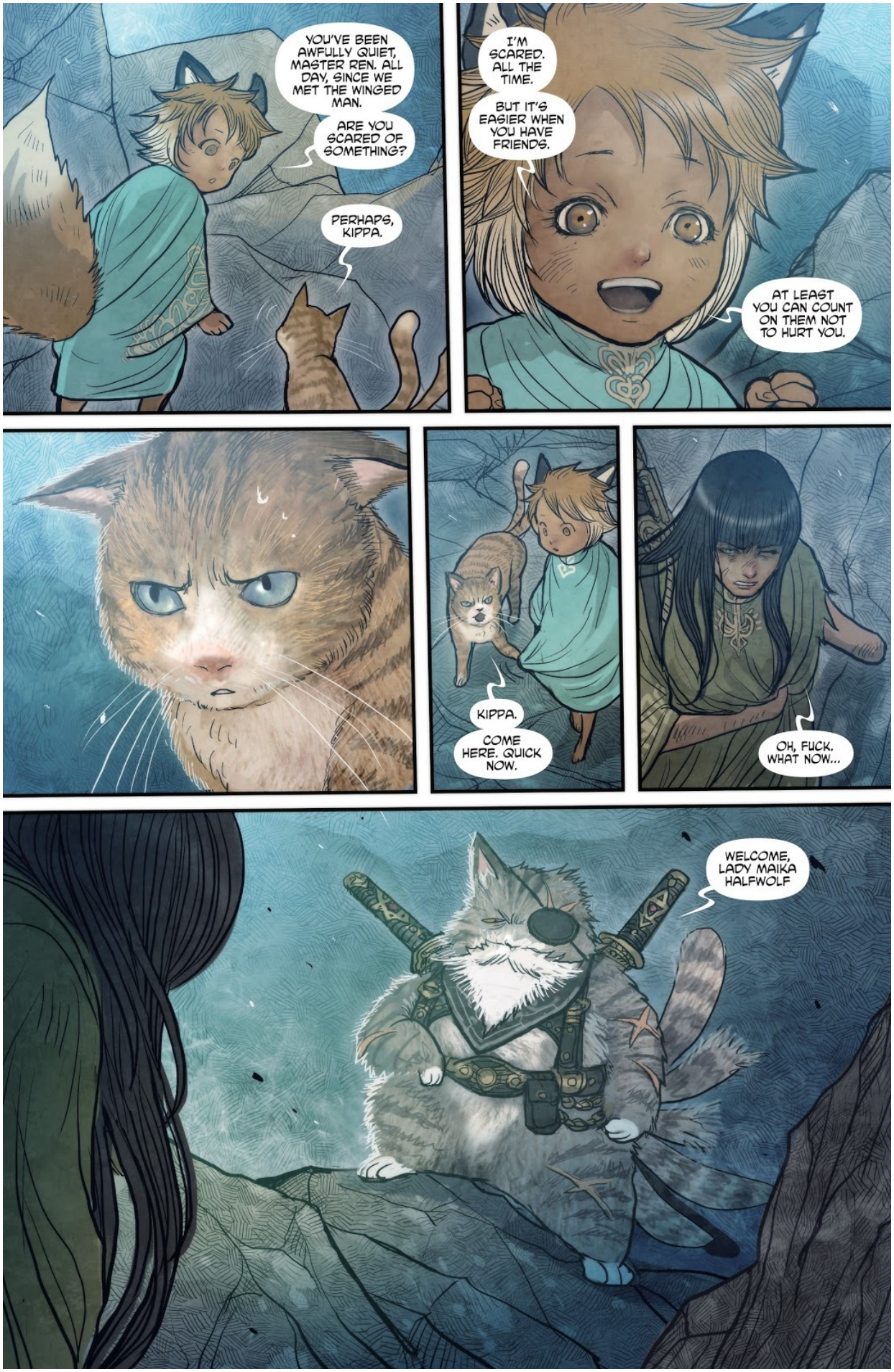
NO...
NO!
HUSH.
DAUGHTERS SHOULD ALWAYS FEED THEIR MOTHERS.
YOU'RE TOO LATE.
FLAY SUCCUMBED... I CAN ONLY SURMISE HER DEATH WAS A DELAYED REACTION FROM EXPOSURE TO DEMONIC, INFERNAL ENERGIES.
NO....
YOU WILL HAVE YOUR REVENGE.
TELL THE COMMANDER WE'RE LEAVING IN THE AIRSHIP. IMMEDIATELY.
YES, HOLY MOTHER.
THE FRAGMENT OF THE MASK -- YOU CAN TELL US WHERE IT IS?
IN LIFE OR DEATH.
FIND IT FOR ME. AND PERHAPS I'LL SET YOU FREE.

I'VE NEVER SEEN THE RAVENBORN RIDE A HORSE. SEEMS TO DEFEAT THE PURPOSE OF HAVING WINGS.
WINGS TIRE. EASIER TO KEEP AN EYE ON YOU DOWN HERE ANYWAY.
IF I'M SO PRECIOUS, WHY DID THE DUSK COURT SEND ONLY ONE OF YOU?
ANY MORE THAN THAT DRAWS THE EYE. AND THE CUMAEA HAVE GOOD EYES.
I AM STILL PERPLEXED, THOUGH, AT HOW YOUNG YOU ARE. THOUGH I SUPPOSE... IT CHANGES NOTHING.
I'M SEVENTEEN. NOT A CHILD.
AREN'T YOU?
WHAT'S THE DUSK COURT LIKE?
SIR?
THEY'RE NOT ALLOWED TO SPEAK OF IT WITH OUTSIDERS, YOUNG KIPPA.
ESPECIALLY NOT WITH US PEASANTS.
NOT ALL ARCANICS ARE EQUAL, LITTLE FOX. NO MATTER WHAT THE POETS SAY.
BUT NOT IN *THEIR* EYES.
THAT IS NOT TRUE, MAIKA. WE ARE ALL EQUAL IN THE ESTEEM OF THE SACRED-MOTHER.
WE'RE WORSE THAN MUD TO THE GREAT AND ANCIENT LORDS AND LADIES OF THE COURTS. MUD, AT LEAST, YOU CAN WASH OFF.
YOUR BITTERNESS IS CURIOUS...
... GIVEN YOUR OWN LINEAGE, *LADY* HALF-WOLF.
I'M NO LADY. I GREW UP IN THE DIRT. WHAT ABOUT YOU, RAVEN? HOW HIGH WERE YOU BORN?
I WAS BORN AN ORPHAN, SON OF A COMMON SOLDIER WHO DIED FIGHTING THE HUMANS. WHILE YOU WERE ENJOYING YOUR MOTHER'S PRIVILEGES, I WAS CHEWING ON ROCKS, LADY HALFWOLF.
WE'RE ALL THE SAME INSIDE THE CAGE.
WHEN THEY PUT THE COLLARS ON US.

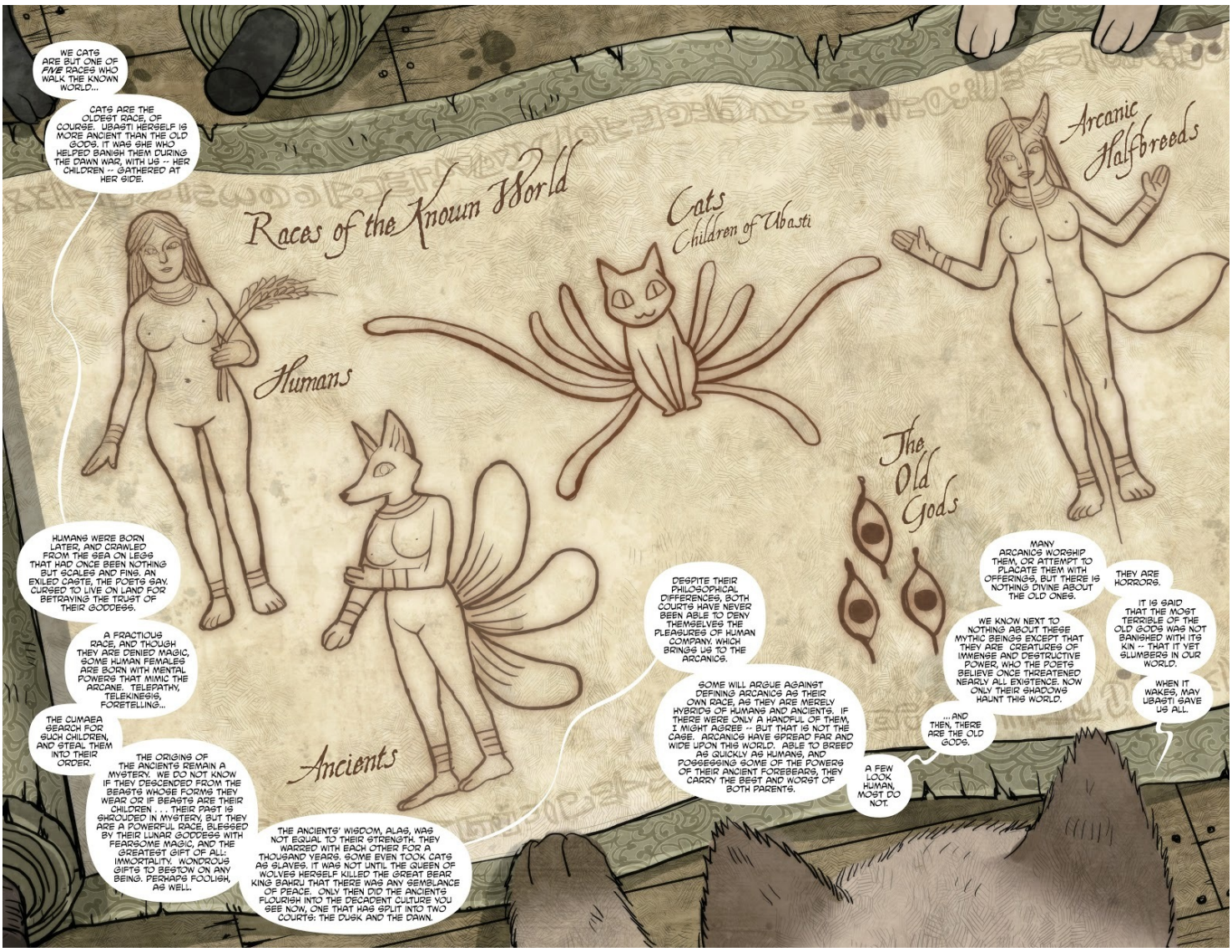
"I WISH WE WOULD REMEMBER THAT.
"EVERYONE IS THE SAME WHEN THE WITCHES CATCH YOU."
WELL. AN AGENT OF THE DUSK COURT. HOW EXTRAORDINARY.
I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO MOUNT A SET OF WINGS ON MY WALL.
YES, HAMMER.
THIS IS FAR MORE OF A CONSPIRACY THAN WE REALIZED.
I THINK, PERHAPS, WE WILL ENJOY AN INTERROGATION OR TWO...
"...BEFORE THE KILLING BEGINS."
TAKE A BRIEF REST. WE'LL WALK THE HORSES THE REST OF THE WAY.
AT THE TOP IS AN OLD CITADEL WHERE WE'LL SPEND THE NIGHT.


IS THAT YOUR MOTHER?
SHE'S VERY BEAUTIFUL.
SHE'S DEAD.
SO IS MINE.
I ALREADY HAD THIS PHOTO, BUT ONLY THIS LEFT HALF.
THE PERSON WHO GAVE IT TO ME SAID THERE WAS NO ONE ELSE IN IT. NOTHING WORTH SEEING.
SHE LIED. I NEED TO FIND OUT WHY. THAT'S WHY I'M GOING TO THYRIA.
I NEED HER TO TELL ME THE NAMES OF THIS FIN-BOY AND THE WOMAN. I NEED HER TO TELL ME WHY SHE LIED.
WHAT DOES THE BACK SAY?
THE BACK OF WHAT?
THE BACK OF THE PHOTO.
PEOPLE WRITE THINGS ON THEM SOMETIMES.
THAT'S WHAT MY FAMILY DID. NAMES. DATES. PLACES.
TO REMEMBER.
HERE. I'LL HELP YOU.
Majka and Marika Halfwolf
Y. La Lim
Arekanara'el
(The Razor Light - Leu Han)
The night before you.
Read more FREE comics on ReadComicOnline


I'm like an animal, Tuya.
WHAT'S WRONG NOW?
YOU LOOK LIKE YOU WANT TO KILL SOMEONE.
NO... I THINK THAT'S HER HAPPY FACE!
I don't know anything.
All the simple things you and others take for granted...all that you remember how to do and feel...all that makes you normal...
IT IS TIME TO GO.
...I've lost them. I'm blind to them.
ARE YOU WELL? YOU LOOK PALE.
I'M... HUNGRY. THAT'S ALL.
What else am I blind to? What have I missed?
What am I missing, even now?
THAT'S QUITE A HUNGER. YOUR PULSE IS ELEVATED. I CAN HEAR YOUR HEART POUNDING IN YOUR CHEST FROM HERE.
DISTRACT ME, IF YOU'RE SO CONCERNED.
HAVE ANY ARCANIC LORDS OR LADIES LEFT THE PROTECTION OF YOUR COURT SINCE THE END OF THE WAR?
AND RISK A CUMAEAN AGENT SLAUGHTERING THEM?
You always said, Tuya, that I have to take a chance on trust.
THEIR BLOOD IS THE MOST PURE. THE WITCHES WOULD REAP A THOUSAND ARCANICS FOR ONE ANCIENT.
OR THE CHILD OF AN ANCIENT.
WHY DO YOU ASK?
LIKE YOU SAID... I'M NOT JUST ANY HALFWOLF.
But what does it mean to choose with my gut when a monster is there?
Who do I trust?
Me...or it?


YOU'VE BEEN AWFULLY QUIET, MASTER REN. ALL DAY, SINCE WE MET THE WINGED MAN.
ARE YOU SCARED OF SOMETHING?
PERHAPS, KIPPA.
I'M SCARED. ALL THE TIME.
BUT IT'S EASIER WHEN YOU HAVE FRIENDS.
AT LEAST YOU CAN COUNT ON THEM NOT TO HURT YOU.
KIPPA.
COME HERE. QUICK NOW.
OH, FUCK. WHAT NOW...
WELCOME, LADY MAIKA HALFWOLF

PLEASE, DO NOT STRUGGLE.
IT WOULD END BADLY FOR YOU.
AND WE'RE NOT *QUITE* READY FOR YOU TO DIE.
TO BE CONTINUED...


Races of the Known World
Humans
Cats
Children of Ubasti
Arcanic Halfbreeds
Ancients
The Old Gods
WE CATS ARE BUT ONE OF FIVE RACES WHO WALK THE KNOWN WORLD...
CATS ARE THE OLDEST RACE, OF COURSE. UBASTI HERSELF IS MORE ANCIENT THAN THE OLD GODS. IT WAS SHE WHO HELPED BANISH THEM DURING THE DAWN WAR, WITH US -- HER CHILDREN -- GATHERED AT HER SIDE.
HUMANS WERE BORN LATER, AND CRAWLED FROM THE SEA ON LEGS THAT HAD ONCE BEEN NOTHING BUT SCALES AND FINS. AN EXILED CASTE, THE POETS SAY, CURSED TO LIVE ON LAND FOR BETRAYING THE TRUST OF THEIR GODDESS.
A FRACTIOUS RACE, AND THOUGH THEY ARE DENIED MAGIC, SOME HUMAN FEMALES ARE BORN WITH MENTAL POWERS THAT MIMIC THE ARCANE. TELEPATHY, TELEKINESIS, FORETELLING...
THE CUMAEA SEARCH FOR SUCH CHILDREN, AND STEAL THEM INTO THEIR ORDER.
THE ORIGINS OF THE ANCIENTS REMAIN A MYSTERY. WE DO NOT KNOW IF THEY DESCENDED FROM THE BEASTS WHOSE FORMS THEY WEAR OR IF BEASTS ARE THEIR CHILDREN . . . THEIR PAST IS SHROUDED IN MYSTERY, BUT THEY ARE A POWERFUL RACE, BLESSED BY THEIR LUNAR GODDESS WITH FEARSOME MAGIC, AND THE GREATEST GIFT OF ALL: IMMORTALITY. WONDROUS GIFTS TO BESTOW ON ANY BEING. PERHAPS FOOLISH, AS WELL.
THE ANCIENTS' WISDOM, ALAS, WAS NOT EQUAL TO THEIR STRENGTH. THEY WARRED WITH EACH OTHER FOR A THOUSAND YEARS. SOME EVEN TOOK CATS AS SLAVES. IT WAS NOT UNTIL THE QUEEN OF WOLVES HERSELF KILLED THE GREAT BEAR KING BAHRU THAT THERE WAS ANY SEMBLANCE OF PEACE. ONLY THEN DID THE ANCIENTS FLOURISH INTO THE DECADENT CULTURE YOU SEE NOW, ONE THAT HAS SPLIT INTO TWO COURTS: THE DUSK AND THE DAWN.
DESPITE THEIR PHILOSOPHICAL DIFFERENCES, BOTH COURTS HAVE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO DENY THEMSELVES THE PLEASURES OF HUMAN COMPANY. WHICH BRINGS US TO THE ARCANICS.
SOME WILL ARGUE AGAINST DEFINING ARCANICS AS THEIR OWN RACE, AS THEY ARE MERELY HYBRIDS OF HUMANS AND ANCIENTS. IF THERE WERE ONLY A HANDFUL OF THEM, I MIGHT AGREE -- BUT THAT IS NOT THE CASE. ARCANICS HAVE SPREAD FAR AND WIDE UPON THIS WORLD. ABLE TO BREED AS QUICKLY AS HUMANS, AND POSSESSING SOME OF THE POWERS OF THEIR ANCIENT FOREBEARS, THEY CARRY THE BEST AND WORST OF BOTH PARENTS.
A FEW LOOK HUMAN, MOST DO NOT.
...AND THEN, THERE ARE THE OLD GODS.
MANY ARCANICS WORSHIP THEM, OR ATTEMPT TO PLACATE THEM WITH OFFERINGS, BUT THERE IS NOTHING DIVINE ABOUT THE OLD ONES.
WE KNOW NEXT TO NOTHING ABOUT THESE MYTHIC BEINGS EXCEPT THAT THEY ARE CREATURES OF IMMENSE AND DESTRUCTIVE POWER, WHO THE POETS BELIEVE ONCE THREATENED NEARLY ALL EXISTENCE. NOW ONLY THEIR SHADOWS HAUNT THIS WORLD.
THEY ARE HORRORS.
IT IS SAID THAT THE MOST TERRIBLE OF THE OLD GODS WAS NOT BANISHED WITH ITS KIN -- THAT IT YET SLUMBERS IN OUR WORLD.
WHEN IT WAKES, MAY UBASTI SAVE US ALL.

MONSTRESS MAIL

Greetings, MONSTRESS fans! Your outpouring of support for this book continues to be more than we ever dared hope for. Next month, we'll be finishing our first arc, providing a few answers and asking even more questions as Maika faces a new set of challenges. We hope you'll stick with us as the journey continues, and that you'll continue to send us your wonderful letters and gorgeous fanart in the meantime!

Now, let's open the mailbag…

Even though final exams start tomorrow, I felt the urge to write this. So, first off, Issue #2 did not disappoint. After that juggernaut #1, I was afraid that the follow-up wasn't going to be enthralling. Man, was I wrong. It was so well paced that I completely forgot that we're back to a normal page count. From the bad-ass trio of Inquisitrixes, to the incredible wrestling match with the Scyth people, and topping it off with a lecture from Professor Tam Tam – this world is so vast that I cannot believe that we've barely scratched the surface yet.

I also want to say that reading about the creation of MONSTRESS has really upped my appreciation of it. Marjorie's touching story about her strong-willed grandparents created another layer of emotional depth. The fact that she and Sana have to use a translator to talk to each other, but still communicate to create this phenomenal comic, blew my mind. I also cannot forget the fact that they represent the Asian community that always seems to be in the background. I'm not one to express much patriotism or nationalism, nor am I Chinese or Japanese (I'm Filipino), but man is it awesome to see this demographic be represented. Everything about this comic, from the world, story, characters, art, lettering, creators, and so on, really is just spectacular. This has become one of my favorite comics, and I'm really happy and thankful to have the MONSTRESS team share it with all of us.

Hope to see this series last for a while,
Chuck S.

P.S. Shout-out to Geek & Sundry's Twitch.tv show, The Pull, for introducing me to MONSTRESS.

Thank you, Chuck! We hope you did well on your final exams, but we're glad you took a study break to write this letter. Representation is incredibly important for all of us here at Team MONSTRESS, and we're so glad to hear the story has resonated with you.

Why did you have to kill trees to print one of the worst comic books ever? This book has the worst writing, vomit colouring, one-dimensional characters, and stick figure art. Terrible!

Haha, just kidding. I said all that just to get your attention.

The worst mistake I ever made in life was giving up collecting comic books. I got back into it six years ago, and collecting comics in this age where the writing, characters, and art have never been better was the best decision of my life. These days, comic books are like vinyl records. Now, comics have much smaller print runs and publishers don't fuck around. Pretty much all comics coming out today are awesome, but MONSTRESS is awesomely AWESOME! It is as if all the great writers and artists of the Enlightenment and the Renaissance were transplanted into the 21st Century and told to make comics at Image.

I have been a fan of anime since public school when I used to come home and watch *Battle of the Planets,* and was blown away as a young adult by films such as *Akira* and *Ninja Scroll*. And MONSTRESS ranks right up there with the greats. I am also a cat person. I have a Siamese named Tinkerbell who also loves to talk like Master Ren, so that was icing on the cake.

I believe that far too many have it wrong in living for death, when the ancient Egyptians had it right all along – to live for life. Life is supposed to be all about learning, creating, and exploring. MONSTRESS is and will always be a comic book I was meant to find and a much-valued component of that, so you have great thanks from me for your excellent work!

Kind regards,
Darryl S.

Wow, Darryl – I'm sure all the other creators at Image are as flattered as we are to be compared to the likes of Da Vinci and Voltaire! We're glad to hear that you (and Tinkerbell) are on board with our story, and we hope to continue to live up to your kind compliments. Thank you!

I'm a French comic book reader, and I'm lucky to have access to some U.S. comics thanks to a bookshop near my city that sells imported comic books. I found MONSTRESS on imagecomics.com. I was searching for new comics to read and MONSTRESS intrigued me the most, thanks to Takeda's beautiful artwork. I love

Read more FREE comics on ReadComicOnline

the mix between Asian and Steampunk. And I fell in love, if we can say that, just by looking at the cover. So I decided to go buy the first three issues, and I finally read #1 and #2 today on the train.

Not only is the artwork amazing, but also the story, characters, atmosphere, and the universe are so interesting! To be honest, MONSTRESS is one of my favorite comic books now, and it's one of the rare ones (like Neil Gaiman's The Sandman) that makes me feel changed after reading it. I can't wait to get the TPB. I want to know more about Maika's secrets and power, the monster inside her, and how her actions will change the world! So as we say here: merci beaucoup!

Time to read issue #3.
Edi T.

Merci, Edi! As we noted last month, we're so lucky that comic book fans around the world have found their way to MONSTRESS, and we're glad to hear the book – and Sana's art in particular – is making such an impact on you. We hope you enjoyed issue 3, and that you continue to follow us on this journey!

I am at a loss for words! This comic has captured my heart. Quite simply, I'm obsessed! It has been quite a while since a story has had me this excited. Sana, your art is absolutely stunning. Marjorie, your storytelling is outstanding. What a perfect team! I could not ask for anything more – except, perhaps, for it to never end. It does not get better than this. You have created a world that I continually want to visit, with interesting characters I immediately feel for and connect with. The Asian influence, powerful female characters, and fantasy setting make this comic irresistible. A gorgeous creation, thank you so much for MONSTRESS!

Amanda C.

Thank you, Amanda! While we can't promise that MONSTRESS will continue into infinity, we definitely have a lot more story to tell, and we hope it continues to bring you joy.

I'm a 52-year-old comics fan (and creative type) who absolutely loves MONSTRESS. I've been collecting comics for four decades (that's only three years in superhero years!) and while I've had my favorite artists and writers, it's pretty rare to find a creative team that bends my brain so well. Alan Moore, John Totleben and Stephen Bissette on Swamp Thing. Greg Rucka and J. H. Williams III on Batwoman. Charlotte English and Elsa Kroese's wonderful fantasy webcomic, Spindrift.

And now, Marjorie Liu and Sana Takeda. Taken by themselves, the writing and art are superb; together, they are spectacular. I cannot throw enough rose petals at your feet. A friend recently asked me to recommend comic panels fine enough to frame; I pointed him at MONSTRESS and said, "Take your pick." Issue #3 is particularly strong in this regard, cover to cover. The scenes with Yvette and the Inquisitrix are riveting, as is Maika's dream in the Egyptian-style tomb. The line art, the inking, the colors... wow.

But as beautiful as the art is (and it is beautiful), the writing is sharp and engaging, too. I like that you take risks in your plot; in this book, violence toward the innocent is portrayed as ordinary and mundane, giving the reader a gut-punch without feeling exploitative or pandering. It plays out like the real world, with real-world stakes and consequences. I love it. I absolutely love it. (And I especially love wee Kippa, the living chibi fox girl.)

This letter has run far too long, but it's your fault for making the book so damn good.

Best wishes and may you have a good long run,
Terry D.

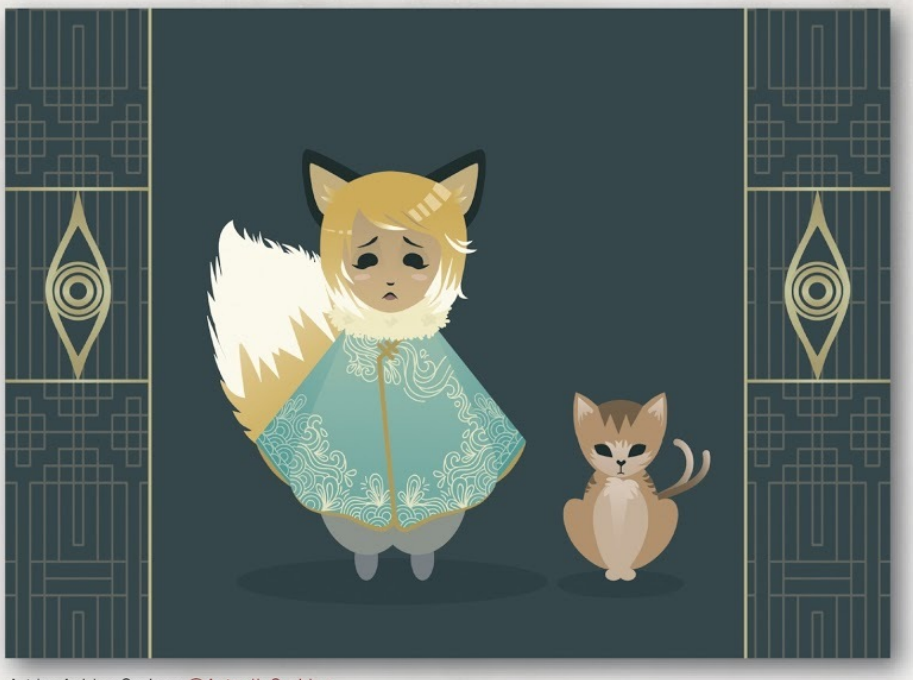
We'll never turn down a long letter, Terry! Thank you so much for your compliments, and particularly for mentioning us in the same breath as so many brilliant creators. Whether you're reading the book or framing it (and we wouldn't blame you, considering how good Sana is!), we hope you continue to enjoy our work.

Thanks again to all of our letter-writers for sharing their thoughts. And now, let's go to the next page to check out some more of the gorgeous fanart our readers have been submitting!

MONSTRESS FAN ART

Send Letters & Fan Art to
monstress.comic@gmail.com
Mark Them OK TO PRINT

#Monstress for Twitter & Instagram



Art by Ashley Sudney @ActuallySudden

Art by Liam Donnelly
liamdonnellyart.tumblr.com

Art by Julian van Zandweghe
@brokenshrines

NEXT ISSUE

#MONSTRESS

IMAGECOMICS.COM
RATED M / MATURE

SPECIAL DELIVERY
D'ARGH-EMPIRE